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Gandhian Nonviolence as a Response to Epistemological Violence

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Introduction

To aid consideration of the contemporary relevance of Gandhi and of the forms which might be taken by nonviolence today, its reach and application in the context of contemporary society, we can turn towards an analysis of the relationship between the structures of globalisation and contemporary manifestations of violence. In an important but often overlooked 1988 paper, *Reductionist Science as Epistemological Violence*, Vandana Shiva described the impact of dominant forms of reductionist models of scientific knowledge as 'epistemological violence'.

In the years following the publication of that paper, economic globalisation, under a dominant framework of neo-liberal marketisation, and the development of more novel forms of social and cultural imperialism, has only exacerbated the condition that Shiva identified. She, and the other contributors to the volume in which it was published, posited a shared analysis of existing applications of determinist techno-scientific discourses, particularly in the case of international development programmes, as both socially divisive and culturally destructive. The epistemological reductionism identified can be read as an extreme form of utilitarianism which acts as an

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arbiter of values, reshaping consideration of the good life, and excluding any goals except insofar as they conforms to the dominant rationality.

Between them, whilst not explicitly expressing their analyses in relation to Gandhian thought, the authors nevertheless developed a critical framework consistent with what might be considered a neo-Gandhian approach, revisiting the fundamental assumptions of Gandhian principles but not tied to any form of Gandhian textual hermeneutics. Ashis Nandy, as the volume's editor, has developed this line of reasoning most widely in academic contexts, but the contributions of Claude Alvares and Shiv Vivanathan should not be overlooked, alongside, of course, the vital contributions of Shiva herself in a more popular context.

Whilst Gandhian methods of nonviolence are comfortably aligned with processes of reconciliation and harmonisation in the aims of reducing conflict, it is all too easily overlooked that they originally derive from a process designed initially to confront injustice and developed into a tool to remove imperial rule, and to challenge the underpinning conceptualisation which divides the world into the ruler and the potential subject. In the context of the hegemony of contemporary global capital, therefore, it is important to reinterpret the significance of Gandhian nonviolence as a means by which the reductionist epistemology of global capital – under which ultimate value and meaning are reduced to economic units – can be also be challenged and confronted.

This paper, therefore, looks towards the development of Gandhian nonviolence not simply as technique or means (although these are by no means unimportant), but as an emancipatory praxis - a critical process of emancipation. Reductionist epistemologies, whether scientific, political or economic, imply conditions of subordination, where dominant knowledges are able to reproduce themselves by denying the validity of alternative experience, explanation and valuation. Nonviolence as theory and practice is hereby read as a transformative framework that refutes the subordination of any social 'other'.

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The argument proceeds in three stages. First, it examines the basis for the interpretation of the structural violence of contemporary capital, drawing primarily on the work of Shiva but also locating her discussion within the context of a broader range of post-developmental analysis of social change. Second, the paper draws on Gandhian writing and practice to re-examine the relationship between class conflict and nonviolence. Third and finally, the paper provides a prognosis for the development of nonviolent anti-capitalisms derived from these theoretical grounds.

The paper thus looks toward further development of Gandhian political theory and action as its own dissenting tradition, derived from, but not limited to, the historic Gandhi. The distinctiveness of Gandhian or neo-Gandhian praxis arises from its place as one of the many forms of opposition to and rejection of global capital, not as a means of conflict reduction by which to reconcile and facilitate the social relations of capital, nor even as a means by which to ameliorate its worst effects. In order to lay out the grounds upon which this consideration of Gandhian nonviolence can proceed we should first examine the underlying issues which characterise the contemporary global hegemony of capital.

Shiva's analysis

The 1988 collection of essays, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A requiem for Modernity*, edited by Ashis Nandy in 1988 and in which Shiva's essay was pulished was occasioned by a study of science and violence, part of a larger United Nations University programme on Peace and Global Transformation (Nandy 1988 vii). The contributing authors, including Nandy, can be seen perhaps as indicative of a wave of scholarship able to proceed in developing Gandhian analysis whilst separating itself from the immediate shadow of Gandhi the man. Gandhian thought, in the first 50 years after his death has suffered from an almost inevitable over-dependence on the historical figure. The difference in the approach of the more recent generation of scholars and activists approach is that they develop and articulate analyses of the contemporary condition indebted to a Gandhian approach without necessarily

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being reliant on relating each aspect of their analyse to Gandhi as a source. Indeed, in this entire volume only 3 index references are made to M.K. Gandhi himself, and yet the analytical framework is clearly progressing a form of Gandhian theory.

For Gandhian scholarship to move forward, as Juergensmeyer commented as early as 1984, we need to recognise and to be able to move beyond the immediate historical legacy with its complex and contradictory strands. Indeed, the historical Gandhi can even be a barrier to contemporary action inasmuch as it actually dis-empowers individuals rather than providing a basis for empowerment, as has been described by Arundhati Roy (1999) in the context of the Narmada Bachao Andolan or in My own interviews with contemporary social activists (Cox 2002). Even the briefest survey of the literature will reveal a multiplicity of 'Gandhis' interpreted through different ideological positions. Lester Kurtz has suggested at least six distinct major narrative groups. Each of these narratives serves a particular community of interpretation and seeks to appropriate power and authority through its discursive functioning. Throughout these different narratives, however, Kurtz notes a largely common theme of the progressive erasure of Gandhi's critique of modernity. It is this critique of modernity, in particular relation to the reductionist nature of scientific discourse, that Shiva's essay addresses, and which, this paper contends, is vital in the context of contemporary global capital.

Shiva's argument is that the modernist narrative of scientific progress is 'quintessentially reductionist': that is, it seeks to explain the whole by fragmenting knowledge into dissociated parts, dividing expert from non-expert, and thus delegitimising criticism or challenge. The epistemological basis of this reductionist view of the world is therefore fundamentally totalitarian, refuting all other claims to alternative possibilities. As such, it is therefore a source of violence, not an ethically neutral zone as its proponents claim.

Vitally, Shiva identifies the reductionist tendency within modernist and determinist techno-scientific narratives as a truth-claim. But it is a truth claim that allows no opposition. It is an exclusivist truth-claim, allowing neither

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alternative interpretations nor for modification except by itself. There is no space in it for the relativism of Gandhi's insistence that no-one has exclusive access to Truth.

The critique of reductionism advanced by Shiva is shared amongst the other contributors to the volume. Claude Alvares connects the analysis of science as an epistemological mode to its justificatory role in technological development and adoption. Further, he purses the argument into an historico-political dimension, noting that "since science and technology are both colonizing activities, any suggestions about delinking them from imperialism can only be fraudulent" (Alvares 1988: 77).

Both intellectually and practically, a significant consequence of the dominance of reductionist modes of thinking can be seen in the broader cognitive establishment of binary modes of understanding. Belief and action, thought and practice, fact and value are segregated and divided one from another into separated realms. The 'setting aside' necessary for the process of exploration of research in modernist epistemologies has not been accompanied by a similar reunification when examining the utility or desirability of the outcomes of that research and knowledge creation.

The practical consequences of dividing understanding into binary opposites are intensified by the process of unequal valuation that an hierarchically organised social structure imposes on such polar divisions. Ariel Salleh (1997) has argued, in the context of analysing the binary systems that operate intellectually around gender and nature/culture debates, that a win/lose logic operates, whereby the valuing of one element of any binary pairing comes at the cost of the devalorisation of the other. Her analysis is equally valid as a means of understanding the elevation of fact over value in decision-making and of the prioritisation of investment – whether capital, time or human resources – necessitated by the nexus of contemporary reductionist approaches to scientific understanding and its linkages to technocratic and bureaucratic rule. Combining Salleh's analysis of power in language with Shiva's account we see the beginnings of the practical and political implications of otherwise invisible epistemological assumptions.

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Although not explicit in her account, what Shiva has done is to counterpoise a Gandhian analysis of the impossibility of absolute Truth with the absolutism of contemporary reductionist scientific truth-claims. The elevated and exclusive valuation of expert knowledge – unavailable to those outside of a recognised coterie – propounded and supported by reductionist epistemological systems is revealed as a form of structural violence. An exclusionary and discriminatory elitism is created by the violent epistemology of reductionist science. The intellectual elitism with its claims of exclusive possession of knowledge necessarily establishes and reinforces its boundaries through discriminatory processes, excluding the possibility of access except on its own terms.

The argument pursued here is not intended to refute the possibility or even necessity for specialist knowledge, but to insist that no form of understanding should be allowed to hide behind a veil of exclusivity. The organisation of reductionist knowledge, and the elevation of the expert as the almost sacred bearer of an elite enlightenment and thus also the only one capable of judging the validity of any critique, is noted by Ashis Nandy.

> "The political asymmetry or inequality between the scientist and the laity is endorsed not only by the concept of expertise… but also by a philosophy of science which allows the laity to criticize modern science only in terms of its use value, that is, its social and political deployment and not in terms of its end values, that is, the social and philosophical goals and assumptions built into the heart and culture of modern science. Even this limited criticism … has to be ventured … in terms of the criteria specified by the dominant philosophy of modern science itself" (Nandy 1988: 8-9).

But the impact of this analysis does not stop with a limited critique of the violence done by scientific epistemology. Most importantly of all, Shiva links the reductionist model of scientific knowledge with its relationship with the active processes and self-justification of contemporary capitalism.

For Shiva, the logic of capital is "inseparably and dialectically linked with the reductionist character of contemporary science" (1988: 235). In order to

interpret the consequences of this understanding, it is appropriate to quote her account in full here.

> "Reductionism provides the assumptions and criteria which guide modern science. The basic assumptions are ontological and epistemological.
>
> The ontological assumptions of reductionism are: (a) that a system is reducible to its parts; and (b) that all systems are made up of the same basic constituents which are discrete and atomistic; and (c) that all systems have the same basic processes which are mechanical.
>
> The epistemological assumptions of reductionism are: (a) that knowledge of the parts of a system gives knowledge of the whole system; (b) that 'experts' and 'specialists' are the only legitimate knowledge-seekers and knowledge-justifiers" (Shiva 1988: 235)

The ontological and the epistemological are intertwined. What it means to be human in the world shapes our pursuit of knowledge, and our knowledge of the world helps to form our understanding of what it means to be. If we understand that the conceptual claims to truth of capitalism are inseparably intertwined with the truth claims made and legitimated under the banner of scientific impartiality we can begin to understand the grip of capitalism, not just as a set of economic arrangements, but as a structural and organising power (Cox 2007).

The linkage of scientific 'rationality' with capitalism enables us to reveal the manner in which capital makes its own exclusive and absolutist truth-claims as the only possible 'rational' means of organisation. The logic of the market is extended into all areas of social life, such that even, for example the analysis of religious experience becomes treated as a series of economic (market) transactions (see e.g. discussions in Young 1997).

Further support for the identification of reductionist epistemologies as a key problematic for the formation of social alternatives can be seen in the most recent work of Gilbert Rist. In the third edition of *The History of Development* (2008), Rist's newly added chapters, after a decade's reflection on the original

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argument, point towards the difficulty of opposing a reductionist economic model of capitalist development and the need to move entirely beyond the developmentalist model and its assumptions of automatic progress, in order to facilitate more equitable forms of social transformation. Rist's analysis confirms the nexus of capital and techno-scientific discourses in the form of an absolutism that poses problems for the formation of alternative strategies for development.

Within the parameters established by the epistemological assertions of a reductionist worldview expounded from within the nexus of techno-scientifically rationalist capitalism, Francis Fukuyama's essay, The *End of History*, published a year after Shiva's, is a logical corollary. A determinist and triumphalist reading of contingent historical events is understandable in this context. Indeed, without a sufficient challenge to the underlying conceptual and philosophical framework that brings these rationalities together it becomes exceedingly difficult to refute determinist analyses of history, whether these prioritise technology, capital or any other given factor.

A political response

Shiva analyses the epistemological and ontological assertion of contemporary capitalism as fundamentally violent. The reduction of human existence to any singular function necessarily denigrates the richness of our complex and multifaceted human experience. However, it is the implications of this structural analysis of violence in the political sphere that this paper aims to explicate more fully. To build an understanding of contemporary nonviolence we must explore the structural conditions against which it is counterposed.

In exploring the implications of the rise of new forms of oppositional politics oriented around the World Social Forum, Santos reminds us that,

> "[l]eft thinking always started from the idea that democratic liberal capitalist societies are based on a violent foundational act. … the original violence of colonization … [and] the imposition on the victims of wage labour exploitation, of a social order in which

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> equality before the law is merely a device that legitimates substantive inequality" (Santos 2006: 3).

Restoring the understanding of contemporary global capitalism as fundamentally violent, relocates Gandhian thought, and what perhaps might be regarded her as neo-Gandhian political thinking, to the forefront of discussion of anti-capitalism. Shiva's analysis re-places Gandhian thought at the heart of what it means to claim an oppositional position.

The essays in *Science, Hegemony and Violence*, were written in the historical context of assertive neo-liberal capital expansionism, the collapsing of Soviet influence, and the imminent end of an international order defined by the supposed bifurcation of global order into East and West, communist and capitalist domains. India's original Nehruvian insistence on its locations apart of a third position in relation to east-west cleavages, did not and has not, immured it from the expansionism of neo-liberal capital, and the invasiveness of the market into all areas of economic and social life. Under Indira Gandhi and in the aftermath of the emergency, its embrace of free-market doctrine was exemplary, to the point of determining alternative strategies as either unfeasible or disloyal (see e.g. Ali 1991). Independent communist thought, even though non-soviet-dependent, whether in India or outside, was subject to a widespread discrediting with the break up of Soviet Union. The rapid replacement of soviet communism by rampant gangster capitalism in Russia during the 1990s underlined the problem of the lack of viable opposition.

In this global void in oppositional thinking appeared a number of critiques. Some (see. E.g. Nicholson and Seidman 1995, Mouffe 1995 Alexander et al 1997) were oriented about the conceptual locus of post-modernity or other forms of post-identities: defined through a recognition that they were trying to reformulate oppositional politics, yet without the dependence on a single, central agent, or even agency, of change. Discussion of the merits or otherwise of the complexities of post-modernity in politics wavered with varying degrees of fruitfulness and futility around the millennium. However, it is notable that the most far-reaching of the socio-political analyses were those whose central concern is with the immediate processes of social change as articulated in the area of development politics (see Rahnema (ed.) 1997;

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Santos 1999). Elsewhere, rapidly increase in rates of globalisation of capital and the transformation of production economies brought about by the advent of digital communications in this same period, prompted attentions to turn towards the theories of globalisation as a means by which to interpret and understand the rapid changes in economic and social organisation.

Global Capitalism as Empire

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* was published at the end of 2000. Its aim was to recreate and restate an explicitly communist left analysis for the contemporary world. Whilst the position argued here diverges from Hardt and Negri's analysis and outlook on a considerable number of points, (most notably in their insistence on the need for a global response), their work is nevertheless important in forcing us to reconsider the contemporary nature and experience of imperialism and the degree to which globalised capital constitutes a novel form of Empire.

Passavant (2004: 3), succinctly summarising Hardt and Negri's position, argues that for them "Empire is the form of sovereignty that exists under conditions of globalization". Recognizing the imperial nature of globalisation is of fundamental. For Hardt and Negri, what is unique in the contemporary situation is the deterritorialisation of the imperium. Unlike previous forms of empire, the conditions of Empire pertaining today are not located within a single geographic state: Empire is an unbounded condition, having no fixed physical (or even ontological) reality, yet is nevertheless a universal order without form or limit.

Considerable discussion has followed Hardt and Negri's work, typified by Passavant and Dean's edited collection *Empire's New Clothes.* A central point of argument is whether Hardt & Negri underestimate or even fatally misinterpret the nature of territorialism and the ongoing importance of the nation state, and whether the events of September 11th and the subsequent wars and pursued by the United States and its allies on the pretext of a war against terror, invalidate their argument. Both Amin (2004) and Boron (2005), reject the deterritorialisation of capital central to Hardt & Negri, and explicitly identify the United States at the heart of a triad of factors that constitutes a

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geographic centre of Empire. Petras and Veltmayer (2001, 2005) further reinforce the integral linkage of globalization as empire, again insisting (contra Hardt & Negri) that the current reconstitution of empire is necessarily imperialist. These particular arguments surrounding *Empire* are less pertinent to the argument made here than the centrality of rethinking the globalisation of capital as a new form of imperialism. Whether one accedes to or rejects Hardt and Negri's characterisation of empire without imperialism, it is clear that capital exerts its claim of sovereignty throughout the empire (whether territorialised or not), producing a variety of novel forms on the way.

Here, we need to remind ourselves that imperialism is always, as Santos points out (above), fundamentally violent. The uncertainty over territoriality does nothing to diminish the argument of the fundamentally violent nature of contemporary globalisation. Recalling and developing Shiva's analysis, we can more clearly see the connections between the epistemological and ontological assumptions of reductionist science and those same assumptions as the operational basis for the forces of capital played out in the drive towards neo-liberal economic globalisation.

To challenge empire is to reject its claims to hegemony. Such a challenge requires the creation of alternatives, not acceptance of its methods, and it is here that we need to assess the dialogue between Marxist and Gandhian ideas on the creation of social alternatives and also the difficulties and limitations of much contemporary Marxist analysis in the light of globalization, highlighted by the work of Hardt and Negri, together with other neo- or post-Marxist scholars such as Ernesto Laclau.

Agency and Alternatives

The hegemonic imperial claim of globalised capital is that there can be no alternative, that nothing can exist outside of its totality. Yet we can see the emergence of contemporary movements and of forms of activism that *do* exist outside, that *do* provide a myriad of fragmenting and constantly shifting possibility, as highlighted consistently by analysts of the practices and procedures of the WSF (see e.g. Sen, Anand, Escobar and Waterman (eds.)

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2004; Fisher and Ponniah 2004; Sen and Saini (2005). In particular, Boaventura de Sousa Santos has consistently developed this theme in a number of works (see. e.g. Santos 1995, 1998, 2006), exploring what he terms the formation of a 'cosmopolitan counter-hegemonic globalisation'. Whilst not itself utopian in the conventional sense of the term, this counter-hegemony is rooted in an utopian imaginary: that is, the capacity to imagine and envision other realties than the existing hegemonic order of structures of global capital.

Santos elaborates his consideration of these critical utopian imaginaries as characterised by their creation of negative space rather than the positive and positivist 'blueprints' that epitomise conservative utopias. These latter forms act to curtail future choice, closing possibility, a process inherent in their advocacy of teleological visions of necessary or inevitable futures, describing what must be. Conversely, critical utopias open up multiple future possibilities by refuting the conservative argument that 'there is no alternative'.

What the new utopian movements do not do is to create a new emancipatory class, or constitute a new class conflict. The complex and cosmopolitan movements that create shifting alliances working towards alternative provide "an opportunity to reinvent a commitment, moreover, which, rather than being a product of enlightened vanguardist thought, unfolds as sheer common sense" (Santos 1995: 519). These movements, crystallised in the years since Sousa's original argument in the physical form of the WSF, are in the process of re-inventing a politics of opposition that draws from and is indebted to, but is not limited by, previous models of oppositional politics, largely rooted in the 19th century. In this context it is particularly relevant also to note the centrality of a commitment to nonviolence as a central plank of the WSF mechanism.

Santos argues that "Gandhi symbolizes the most radical rejection of the imperial North in our [twentieth] century" (Santos 1995: 511). Thus some form of re-evaluation of Gandhian politics is crucial to the formulation of alternative visions of social organisation, particularly in relation to his rejection of "European Marxism and Communism" which Santos describes as "though unquestionably representing a profound critique of the imperial North, are still too compromised with it to function as models for the construction of a

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nonimperial South" (Santos 1995: 512). It is here, therefore that we should to examine more specifically the problem of class and conflict within Gandhian writing.

Gandhi and Marx

In his *Talk With Pyarelal On Marxism* (1944 CWMG 83: 459ff), Gandhi addresses the issue of change and agency. Where Marx analyses the historic formation of class through its fundamental relation to the ownership of the means of production, Gandhi rejects Marx's reading of history as overly econometric. It is pertinent to observe that Gandhi's disagreement with historical materialism is not for the method in and of itself, but only inasmuch as it becomes another form of reductionism if all endeavour is reduced to econometric factors. In its place Gandhi interjects a much greater stress on human agency, in line with his emphasis on the important role of self identity.

In one sense, it could be argued that Marx never fully escapes from his indebtedness to Hegel's universal *geist* in his understanding of what actually creates agency within class. For Marx, ultimately the contradictions of class conflict in any given historical era propel it forward: discussion of the precise relationship between structure and agency has been the subject of 150 years of Marxist analysis. Surprisingly, despite his overtly spiritual framework, Gandhi formulates the questions of practical agency in far less abstract form. "What an individual can do, a whole class of people can be induced to do, it is all a question of discovering the right technique. The whole of our non-violent non-co-operation movement, which aims at transforming the British ruling class, is based on this hypothesis." (p.459-460). Class arises from collectivity, not identity from class position – this is what enables the process of transformation to come about. Thus class – and therefore collective agency – is a product of action, not a precondition of action.

The transition from class of itself to class for itself is for both Gandhi and Marx, vital. Yet, by locating class outside of a primary relationship to production, Gandhian analysis of action allows for agentic coalitions across borders of complex forms of oppression. One of the most significant analyses of oppression and emancipation in recent years has been the formulation of

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multicultural feminist perspectives on emancipatory politics that enable coalition-building between groups, drawing upon the power of identity politics, but not exclusively identified with the creation of separate identities. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, one of the consistently most perceptive critics in this area described Bernice Johnson Reagon's practical work which has utitlised this multicultural feminist mode of analysis and activism as employing:

> "*coalition* as the basis to talk about the cross-cultural commonality of struggles, identifying *survival*, rather than *shared oppression*, as the ground for coalition. While sameness of experience, oppression, culture, etc., may be adequate to construct this space [for nurturing a radical politics] …. this very sameness in community is exposed as having been built on an ossification of difference" (Mohanty 1995:78).

Avoiding essentialist analyses of community, class or identity whilst simultaneously acknowledging their usefulness as starting points of engagement in emancipatory politics, this approach presents us with a powerful basis for political engagement in the processes of social change.

The articulation of an emancipatory and oppositional politics derived from coalition rather than pre-determined class (or other) identity can simultaneously be read as a direct legacy of the Gandhian approach. However, the relation between Gandhian and Marxian approaches is not entirely divergent and we must be careful not entirely to dismiss the centrality of other aspects of Marxist sociology that are importantly common to Gandhian politics.

Class conflict, Nonviolence and Conflict Resolution

The problem of revolutionary violence and its relation to radical social change has ever been a complex problem for all forms of pacifism. William Lloyd Garrison, for example, was forced to confront the same problem in relation to Nat Turner's slave rebellion in 1831. Though he rejected the means, he had to concede that the welcomed the ends to which they were directed (Mayer 1998: 120ff). The same ambivalence can be seen perhaps, in understanding Gandhi's support of field ambulance work in the conflicts in South Africa and

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during the First World War. During the Second World War, this problem became less pertinent only because actions were then filtered through the lens of the Quit India campaign.

Always and at every stage, the purpose of Gandhian action is to create change, to address situations and relations of injustice. Hence it is important to understand that Gandhi does not refute Marx's conflictual sociology, but rejects the expression of revolutionary violence as the inevitable mechanism of change arising from a class analysis. Marxist analysis rests on the identification of fundamentally competing interests in society, that all forms of historical human society have exhibited fundamental conflicts between competing class interests (Marx 1848). Gandhi therefore rejects the methods, not the analysis of Marxism.

Satyagraha is designed to promote and provoke crisis, not to reconcile the differences but in order to create change. As Brock and Young (1999: 75) argue, "*satyagraha* is not merely a philosophy of non-violence; it is also a technique for the creative resolution of conflict. It does not aim at the elimination of conflict from human relationships. Conflict is admitted as a built-in element of the human situation". Class conflict is confronted and overcome, not erased. Whilst the inequalities of rule and subordination persist, there can be no easy settlement of difference. It is the inequality at the root of the conflict that is the problem, not the conflict itself. Importantly, Gandhian approaches to change require the transformation of the ruling class, not simply its overthrow and replacement with the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is the concept of hierarchy per se that is challenged.

This reading of Gandhi is supported by MN Roy's analysis of the relation between Gandhi and Bolshevism (1925 CWMG 30: 466-470), where Gandhi's opposition to Marx is expressed in his rejection of the tools of revolutionary violence, as utilised by early 20th century Bolshevism and as espoused in the subcontinent by a number of regional groups. It was not, however, an opposition to a sociological understanding of society as fundamentally riven by structural conflict. However, there remains a problem, both theoretical and practical, in the simultaneous promotion of fundamental change with the commitment to non-violence. Within Marxism, as Bhikhu Parekh (1992)

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eloquently argues, this problem remains under-theorised because of Marx's own failure to develop a theory of violence. Yet the praxis of revolutionary struggle which is inseparable from Marxist analysis requires us to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of violence in contemporary society.

This same dilemma of reconciling an opposition to violence with the need for radical, even revolutionary change had confronted the No Conscription movement in the United Kingdom during the First World War. Here, the alliance of socialist conscientious objectors (COs), shaped by dedication to the concept of the universal Brotherhood of Man [explicitly expressed in the formation of secular and socialist 'brotherhood churches'] was confronted by absolutist expressions of pacifism. Aylmer Rose, first organizing Secretary of the NCF and deeply committed socialist argued in terms clearly compatible with a Gandhian absolutist line that "killing is killing, even when you kill a capitalist" (cited in Brock & Young p. 37). Socialist conscientious objectors were torn between their rejection of war on the basis of the international solidarity and their support for the aims of revolutionary socialism, which by 1917 was using violent insurrection in order to bring about revolution in both Russia and in Germany. Those taking an absolutist line were forced – as Garrison had been – to choose between the achievements and the means employed for their attainment – frequently resulting in difficult questions of personal compromise.

Gandhian non-violence during the 1920s and 1930s was developed to remove the British Raj and to transform the (class) interests of the British ruling class. It was therefore a a subtly different goal from the overthrow of the class itself, even though it was clearly a class struggle. Gandhi's argument in *Hind Swaraj* – that without a proper commitment to *swaraj* and *swadeshi* the Raj could continue without the British – expresses well the class dimension of this problem. Gandhi's means for the resolution of class conflict beyond the Raj was explored in the ideal of trusteeship, which in itself can be read as a reform version of anarcho-communist dismantling of the private ownership of capital. The end result is the abolition of exploitation and of hierarchical class relations by the abolition of class interest in favour of trusteeship (Dharmadhikari 1982: chapter 5).

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Thus we establish a necessary synchronicity between a conflictual sociology and Gandhian advocacy of nonviolent social change. However, there remains the problem of the implicit linkage of non-violence and its apparent offspring, conflict resolution, with a more functionalist position which seeks to minimise the conflict of interest in society rather than overcome it. The danger is that conflict resolution becomes a means by which inequalities in social relations are erased through normalisation or minimised. The reformist position, focusing on constant and incremental changes and proceeding on the assumption that these are inevitably progressive has been identified in the recent work of Angela McRobbie (2008) as a significant barrier to a liberational politics. She argues that the positions of a number of influential contemporary sociologists, (notably Beck, Giddens and Lash) amount to a regressive form of retraditionalisation, despite their claims for the liberatory potential of consumer choice. The freedom promised within global capital by choice, or by any other means, remains circumscribed by capital itself. The cost of these freedoms is acceptance of the overall status quo, acceptance of the broader rule of global capital. The functionalist route, seeking to resolve conflict rather than to address the underlying inequalities, cannot provide a means to escape its own contradicitons

Such functionalist sociologies lead ultimately to reformist goals and methods. However, it is clear that, as Geoffrey Ostergaard (1985: 364) wrote, “from a revolutionary perspective, it can be argued that what is required is a reformulation of the Gandhian approach in precisely the opposite direction to that required by the reformist”. What is required for a deeper form of Gandhian nonviolence in contemporary society is the need to rediscover the revolutionary implications of autonomy, not in the sense of individualism, but in terms of the capacity for self-determination outside of the norms established by dominant hegemonic expectations. It should be no surprise to encounter these themes of the rediscovery of the individual and of identity as the basis of the collectivity (and collective agency for change) becoming explicit in the writings of numerous post-Marxist scholars from Donna Haraway (1991) onwards (see e.g. Chantal Mouffe, Morwenna Griffiths, Steve Seidman).

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Empires of Violence and Nonviolent Responses

The position of capital in a globalised society is both hegemonic and violent. Yet no hegemonic structure is entirely all encompassing. Each form of empire has its own interstices, spaces within its structures in which forms of alterity may grow and be nurtured, after the fashion of Bey's Temporary Autonomous Zones (Bey 1991; see also McKay 1996).

After Amritsar, the legitimacy of the Raj was been called into question, not just by those beginning to mobilise around the issue of Indian independence. Montague had even gone so far as to question whether the role of the Indian government was that of government by terrorism. It was clear that the British Empire was not sustainable on that basis, only the continuance of greater levels of suppression and state terrorism could maintain such a status. Thus the spaces of opposition were opened up to the extent of permitting hitherto unforeseen and unexpected alliances between disparate oppositional forces,

90 years on the violence of Empire is more subtly disguised. The development project, initiated in the aftermath of American triumph in 1945, was founded on a promise of global freedom and inexorably rising living standards (Bessis 2003, Rist 2008). Despite the expansion of capital and of the accompanying ideological apparatus of Western Supremacy and of transnational corporations as the economic operators of globalisation, adequate living standards for the global majority remain tantalisingly out of reach (Korten 2001). Empires exist to command resources. The imperial dimension of global capital means that globalisation cannot be other than another form of exploitation. Globalised capital, with 'overseas development' as its moral conscience, has created neither a more just nor a more equitable world, nor will it be able to.

According to Brock & Young, (199: 139) , Rienhold Niebuhr argued in 1934 that violence "was implicit in capitalism. Either negatively in the form of starvation and economic pressures on the working class or positively I the case of police brutality." One could not be neutral not disengaged in the class struggle. In the context of today's globalised capital we must find ourselves in

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the same situation. It is behoven non us to take a stand. Advocates of nonviolence may be advocates of pacifism, but cannot be passive in the face of hegemonic violence. However, for Neibuhr this meant the relinquishing of his former passivism in order to engage with the transformation of society. In today's context we can move to engage with this same fundamental struggle but employing the tools of nonviolence as a response to the hegemonic violence of the structures of global capital and its global restructuring of class relations.

Nonviolence as Emancipatory Praxis

One may summarise and rephrase the analysis made so far. Through the lens of nonviolence, the modern order of states is an order at war. Regardless of the linguistic games that lead to the conceptual wars on drugs or terrorism, the hidden reality of the techno-scientific dominance is that of an ongoing state of war (in more traditional understandings) upon the environment and upon those necessarily excluded from the privileged minority, and covertly on that privileged minority who are imprisoned by the norms and expectations of participation in its social life. Where previous generations have argued that in a nuclear age we are constrained to make peace in order to avoid nuclear war (Statement of American Friends Service Committee), then in the age of an empire built on violence we are constrained even compelled to make and active nonviolence: to interpret it and explore it as a way of living and being, an ontological mode.

Current patterns of existence compel the obedient citizen of the 'developed' world to live beyond our planetary and social means. In addition to the contradictions of capital that lead to the foundational violence to the worker, we also now have to consider the ecological contradictions of capital: that the consumption levels of the global consumer elites are simply not replicable. Levels of energy and resource consumption enjoyed by the minority cannot be enjoyed by all. Here we must employ the analysis of epistemological violence to demonstrate that whilst capital is the existing mode of economic order which has produced the environmental impacts the problem is not just

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one of the economic arrangements of capital. In the words of Douglas Lummis (1992: 47)

> The myth that it [economic equality as a result of development] is possible is, of course, functional. It distracts people's attention from the real inequality generated by the world economy; it also legitimises the vast development industry and keeps many good-hearted people in it. But the fact remains that in this or any other economic system, the consumption levels of today's rich, if extended at all, would consume the world.

Plowshares (Ploughshares) and other direct action peace activists, in statements explaining their disruptive forms of nvda against weapons of mass destruction, or of the mechanisms by which people are drawn into an acceptance of militarization and war service, have repeatedly apologised for the disruption of 'normal' acceptable forms of behaviour. "Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, for the burning of paper instead of children … we could not, so help us God, do otherwise", wrote Dan Berrigan explaining his part in the Catonsville Nine.

In the context of structures of epistemological violence, played out in unquestioned consumer capitalism, nonviolence as a commitment to disobedience and nonconformity becomes a necessary form of praxis. It involves a re-orientation of values both internal and external. In this instance, nonviolence becomes a mode of struggle nonviolent resistance as a distinct and encompassing activism and orientation rather than a technique.

Importantly the inequality upon which the lifestyles sold to us by global capital are not just based on the maintenance of global inequality between existing peoples. They also have a time dimension, drawing upon resources that will now be denied future generations. Tim Flannery uses the term *Future Eaters* to point more clearly the resource utilisation nature of these lifestyles, in that they consume more resources than are sustainably available within their own ecosystems (or by trading equitably) and only succeed by drawing on resources of others (not trading equitably) or by taking resources at a greater rate than they can be replaced i.e. from the future. The borrowing of

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resources from the global majority and from the future is a form of environmental and social credit. The global wealthy live beyond their means on credit maintained ultimately by the threat of or the exercise of violence.

Nonviolence as a response to and repudiation of violence in both material (physical) and structural forms requires the identification of and response to violence. Given the structural violence of Empire as described by Hardt and Negri, and its underlying epistemological violence, nonviolent solutions in the contemporary global situation demand not just amelioration of conditions of discomfort and but the creation of entirely different structures of human relations. They require that we seek possibilities of organising outside the structures of violence. No structure is all encompassing, no hegemony entire.

Contemporary nonviolence can take many forms, from non-cooperation with the expectations and norms of consumer society through to more familiar repertoires of action. Nonviolence can become a principle against which to build coalition. Note that these circumstances do not require others to be necessarily sympathetic or necessarily antagonistic – they may arrive at sympathetic critiques without considering nonviolence. Similarly as advocates of nonviolence we need to have the humility to recognise that nonviolence alone does not offer a sufficient solution. The critique of technocracy is that it is hegemonic – it permits of no other solution. Thus our responses cannot be similarly all encompassing. There must be a concomitant commitment to diversity.

In conclusion this paper argues that in light of the dominance of epistemological and structural violence the appropriate reinterpretation of Gandhian nonviolence cannot be programmatic or even pragmatic but need take the form of a spirit of creative and prophetic activity. Creative solutions to epistemological violence are to be seen in the demand for the right to dream, to be imaginative. The insistence of realism and its elevation of practical and administrative approaches to understanding and behaviour should be countered with a commitment to critical knowledge and understanding. Existing realist interpretations of political action reduce us to choices between alternative ways of organising global capital and of alternative ways in which to best represent the interests of global capital. Imaginative and creative

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forms of dissent and of noncooperation are ways in which Gandhian nonviolence can appropriately be re-imagined in an era of globalisation.

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